

Article 15 - A

EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- A. Purpose. To establish procedures for reimbursement of unit employees for the costs associated with continuing education through voluntary participation in job related courses.
- B. Application. The provisions of this Article shall apply to all unit employees on a first come, first served basis in accordance with the terms specified herein.
- C. Funds. The provisions of this Article shall be subject to the availability of departmental funds. Upon request, the Union shall be entitled to receive information regarding specific departmental tuition reimbursement programs/policies. In addition to receiving such written information, the Union may request a labor-management meeting with the Appointing Authority's designated representative(s) to review such materials.
- D. Requirements and Procedures.
 - 1. Full-time employees are eligible to apply for reimbursement if they have attained status, worked in a permanent position with the Department for at least six (6) months and are in satisfactory performance standing prior to the course starting date. Applicants must maintain assignment to a permanent position and be on the payroll at the completion of the course in order to qualify for reimbursement.
 - 2. Application for reimbursement shall directly relate to the improvement, change, or college degree in a field of work which is job related or in preparation for a potential promotion which benefits the Department.
 - 3. Accredited schools, institutes, academies, community colleges, colleges, and universities shall be considered as approved educational centers. Correspondence schools and "mail order" institutions will not be considered acceptable institutions for purposes of reimbursement.
 - 4. Partial (50%) reimbursement may be provided for accredited job-related courses properly pre-authorized for reimbursement upon receipt of written verification of successful course completion with a minimum grade of C or its equivalent. Such reimbursement shall be applicable to expenditures for tuition, books and lab fees. Verification of successful course completion shall be an authentic copy of the grade report. Such verification must be submitted within thirty (30) days of completion of the course. Incomplete courses and/or deferred grades will not qualify for reimbursements for tuition, books or lab fees.
 - 5. No reimbursement will be made for travel, meals, lodging, or other miscellaneous fees or expenses.

6. No unit employee shall receive reimbursement for more than two (2) courses in any one (1) semester or term.
7. For unit employees receiving tuition payments, stipends or education grants from any other government agency or government source or from any scholarship source, reimbursement under this Article will be limited to that portion of the tuition which exceeds the amount of such payments, stipends or grants. Prior to receipt of any reimbursement under this article, employees are required to disclose to the employer reimbursement from all sources of funding for costs associated with the same course, regardless of when payment is, or will be, received. The combination of payment from tuition reimbursement (Article 15-A) and the Professional Development Fund (Article 15-B) shall not exceed 100% of the costs associated with the course.

E. Educational Release Time.

1. Unit employee initiated educational release time may be granted by the Appointing Authority for course attendance during the unit employee's normal work hours subject to the following provisions:
 - a. The course is not otherwise available;
 - b. The course and unit employee qualify under paragraph D;
 - c. The supervisor has determined that course attendance will not interfere unduly with work assignments and their timely and satisfactory completion;
 - d. Such release time must be authorized by the appropriate Bureau Director and Department Personnel Officer.
2. Development of Adjusted Work Schedule:
 - a. Estimated travel time must accompany course attendance time and be included in total educational release time requested;
 - b. Adjusted schedule must indicate how release time is to be made up:
 - (1) Schedule developed must provide for minimal interference with on-going work assignments.
 - (2) Schedule developed must ensure that make up time is scheduled in productively efficient segments.
 - (3) A complete eighty (80) hour pay period must be actually accounted for in each biweekly period.

(4) Schedule must be approved by immediate supervisor.

- c. The unit employee will be responsible for all expenses and course attendance time, inclusive of travel expenses and time, except as possibly reimbursed under paragraph D.
- d. Emergency work situations requiring the unit employee's presence at work or court attendance requirements shall in all cases take precedence over class attendance.

F. Conference Attendance. Effective October 1, 1996, unit employees shall be entitled to up to four (4) days administrative leave of absence within any two consecutive fiscal years subject to the following conditions:

- 1. The conference must be directly related to the unit employee's professional development and must directly relate to the unit employee's employment with the state.
- 2. Prior approval of the unit employee's immediate supervisor shall be required. Operational needs and scheduling requirements may preclude attendance.
- 3. The Employer shall not be obligated to pay any fees, expenses, or any other costs associated with attendance at such conference.
- 4. It is understood that the four days is not to be construed as a limitation of conference attendance for Bargaining Unit employees, but rather a minimum number of days available for conferences or training in addition to those conferences or training sessions that the Department has authorized members to attend.
- 5. Provisions of this Section do not apply to attendance at functions related to any aspect of the Union's exclusive representation function, and shall not apply to any conference which the unit employee is required by the Employer to attend.

The decision of the Employer to grant or deny attendance at any conference shall not be precedential.